بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Fitnah of Takfeer

All Praise is due to Allaah, and may the Allaah's *salaah and salaam* be on Prophet Muhammad, his household, and the noble companions and those who follow their path until the Day of Resurrection. The title *fitnah of Takfeer*: The Trials and Tribulations associated with imputing *kufr* (disbelief) on Muslims (rulers or ruled), is one of the most dangerous *fitan* in our times.

This misleading thought has spread amongst many of the youth in the Muslim world, east and west, north and south. Many of these youths are greatly motivated by their emotions and their vigilant care concerning the deen. As such, they took many of that which they received from the followers of desires. These followers of desires have renewed the principles and thoughts of the early *Khawaarij* (dissidents) and have become an extension of them. This has led to declare *takfeer* on the Islamic societies at large and on all Muslim leaders, without exception. The consequences of this have been very terrible. Blood is being shed.

Definition of *Kufr*:

To better understand *takfeer*, it is necessary to first define *kufr*. Linguistically, the term *kufr* means, "covering and shielding." If an object covers something, then that object *kafarahu* (covered and shielded it). Similarly, it is said that the farmer when he puts the seed in the ground and covers it with soil is a *kafir* from the linguistic aspect, since he covered the seed with dirt.

As for the Islamic meaning, sometimes the word *kufr* means the major *kufr*, which takes a person out of the fold of Islaam. *Kufr* could also refer to the lesser type, which does not take a person from the fold of Islaam, known as *al-kufr al-asghar*. Islamically, the *kafir* is called a *kafir* because he covered and shielded the favor of Allaah (*subhannahu wa ta'ala*). Therefore, the *kafir* did not recognize the favor of Allaah upon him and did not give thanks to Allaah. Rather, he denied the favor of Allaah.

Ahlus-Sunnah (adherents to the *Sunnah*) is on the medium course, with respect to all fundamental matters in Islaam. They are between the two extremes, the excessive ones who exceeded the limits and the negligent ones. Allaah described this in Noble Qur'an (in the translation of the meaning):

(وكذلك جعلناكم أمة وسطا) [الآية، ٢:١٤٣].

«Thus, we have made you a just nation»
Surah al-Baqarah (2:143)

Similarly, regarding the matter of *takfeer*, *Ahlus-Sunnah* is on a medium course between extremism and negligence.

The *kafir* is of two types. The first type is *al-kafir al-aslee* (the orginal *kafir*). This includes all of those who are not Muslims including the Christians and the Jews. Anyone who doubts the *kufr* of *al-kafir al-aslee* is himself a *kafir*. The second type is the apostate who was born to two Muslim parents, who in the stage of adulthood rejected Islaam, either by speech or by action.

Views of *Ahlus-Sunnah* and the Different Sects Regarding *Takfeer*:

The people are divided into three categories regarding *takfeer*. The first category is *al-Khawaarij*. They impute *kufr* on the Muslim due to major sins; with some have gone to the extent to impute *kufr* on the Muslim due to minor sins. Similarly, they impute *kufr* on any Muslim who does not believe the same as them. As such, they have made the blood and wealth of most Muslims permissible. This group has an extension in our time and exists in many parts of the Muslim world.

The second group is *al-Murji'ah*. They claim that *eeman* (faith) is not affected by any sinful act, even if the Muslim commits a major sin. They say all Muslims are believers, and nothing affects faith. Although the beliefs of *al-Murji'ah* comprise different positions, this is an overall summary of their views.

Ahlus-Sunnah are on a medium course between the two extremes. They don't rush to impute *kufr* on the Muslim while not refraining from imputing *kufr* on him if the person commits that which Allaah and/or His Messenger declared to be *kufr*. However, they note, "The Muslim who may say or do that which is considered *kufr* should not have *kufr* imputed on him specifically until the evidence is established on him, with all the conditions of imputing *kufr* fulfilled and all the impediments removed."

Important Matters Regarding *Takfeer*:

First, before *takfeer* can be established, all conditions must be fulfilled and all impediments removed. From the conditions of making *takfeer* are: knowledge, choice, intent, deliberate action or saying of *kufr*, and its acceptance. This implies determining whether the person knows his action is *kufr*, and he has chosen it, without being compelled. Moreover, it must be shown that the person was deliberate in his action and is content with it. From the impediments of *takfeer* are: affirmation of an error, ignorance, compulsion, and misinterpretation. *Ahlus-Sunnah* checks into both the impediments and conditions before imputing *kufr* on a specific person.

The second important matter is that imputing *kufr* on someone is an extremely dangerous matter. No one should indulge in *takfeer*, except those who are firmly established in

knowledge and fulfill certain criterion. **This arises from the fact that *takfeer* is the right of Allaah and His Messenger** (ﷺ:*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*). Therefore, it can only be established by those who are the inheritors of the Prophets, the *ulama* (scholars) who make clear the ruling of Allaah and His Messenger; they are the only ones qualified. Anyone else who involves himself in *takfeer* is on a dark path of transgression and claims for himself a special right with Allaah. Hence, it is not permissible to make *takfeer* on anyone expect the one whom Allaah and His Messenger declared to be as such. Due to the seriousness of *takfeer* and its limits as established by Allaah and His Messenger, Shaykhul Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah, *rahimahullah*, stated:

قال شيخ الإسلام ابن تيمية–رحمه الله تعالى:

"فلهذا كان أهل العلم والسنة لا يكفرون من خالفهم وإن كان ذلك المخالف يكفرهم لأن الكفر حكم شرعي، فليس للإنسان أن يعاقب بمثله، كمن كذب عليك وزنى بأهلك ليس لك أن تكذب عليه وتزني بأهله، لأن الزنا والكذب حرام لحق الله تعالى، وكذلك التكفير حق لله فلا نكفر إلا من كفره الله ورسوله". [الرد على البكري 381/1]

"*That is why the people of knowledge and Sunnah did not resort to making takfeer on those who opposed them, even if the opponent makes takfeer on them. This is because the matter of kufr is a legal right established by shariah, and therefore, the person can not punish by the like, just like if someone who belies you and makes lies against you, you can not spread lies about him, or if someone fornicates with members of your family, you can not fornicate with members of his family. This is because fornication and lying are haraam (unlawful) being Allaah's right. Similarly, takfeer is a right that belongs to Allaah. Hence we do not impute kufr except on whom Allaah and His Messenger declared as such.*" [*Ar-Rad 'Alal Bakari*, v. 3, p. 381].

The danger involved with *takfeer* is not limited to the transgression against the right of Allaah (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*). The person who imputes *kufr* on the others also risks falling into that which he accused his brother with. This is in line with the hadith of the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallaam*),

قال رسول الله ﷺ: "أيما امرئ قال لأخيه "كافر" فقد باء بها أحدهما: إن كان كما قال، وإلا رجعت إليه." [مسلم والترمذي].

"Any person who calls his brother, 'Ya Kafir (Oh Unbeliever), has in fact done an act through which this unbelief would return to one of them. If it were so as he

asserted, then the kufr of the man was confirmed, but if it was untrue, it returns to him (the one who labeled it on his Muslim brother)." [Reported by Muslim and At-Tirmithi**.**]

Similarly, in another narration, the Prophet (ﷺ) stated:

"If somebody accuses another of Fusuq (by calling him 'Fasiq' i.e. a wicked person) or accuses him of Kufr, such an accusation will revert to him (i.e. the accuser) if his companion (the accused) is innocent." [Bukhari].

The third important matter is that *takfeer* causes hate amongst people, especially amongst those who are referred to as *kafir* since no one likes to be labeled as a *kafir*. In fact, this can lead to fights and bloodshed, which will inflict evil on the individuals involved and the society at large.

Shaykhul Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah, *rahimahullah*, said:

قال شيخ الإسلام ابن تيمية، رحمه الله: "وليس لأحد أن يكفر أحداً من المسلمين وإن أخطأ وغلط حتى تقام عليه الحجة وتبين له المحجة، ومن ثبت إسلامه بيقين لم يزل ذلك عنه بالشك بل لا يزول إلا بعد إقامة الحجة وإزالة الشبهة". [الفتاوى ١٢/٥٠١]

"And it is not the right of anyone to impute *kufr* on anyone of the Muslims even if he errs and does wrong until evidence is established upon him and the matter is made clear to him. And the one whose Islaam is affirmed with certainty then it ceases not to exist with him due to doubt. Rather his (state) of Islaam comes to an end only after the establishment of the proof and the elimination of the unclarity." [*Majmoo' al-Fataawa*, v. 12, p. 501]

Takfeer Practiced in Our Times:

First, a type of takfeer practiced in our time is the unrestricted *takfeer* on the Muslim rulers who do not rule by the rule of Allaah. This generalization, without details, has led many of the young Muslims to conclude that it is permissible to rebel against these rulers by force. Consequently confrontations, bloodshed and other problems arising from this are still growing. Moreover, it is bringing chaos and instability to the Muslim world as it is evident to everyone.

Furthermore, this thought did not stop at the rulers but has been extended to the government employees, security forces, and others. It has also reached many imams of *masajid* (mosques), *muadhineen* (those who give *adhan*), and scholars. This arises from the pretext that these are all collaborators with the government.

This pretext has even been extended to the Muslim society at large. Those who do not hold to the belief of these groups are considered *kafir*. This is not an issue in a vacuum; this is real. As such, one is not surprised as to why they kill Muslims or bomb places where there are many Muslims.

It has reached the extent that these groups have called for the complete disassociation from their societies, thinking that all of the society is *kafir* so they can not stay with them. They even abandon their wives if they do not adhere to the same belief as the person holding the *takfeer* principle; similarly, if a wife holds this *takfeer* principle, they say it is incumbent upon her to leave her husband if he does not agree with that. Furthermore, they tell their followers not to make the congregation prayers in the mosques claiming these are not real mosques, and that the imams of these mosques are not Muslims since they were assigned by the government. This is happening in some Muslim countries.

Solution:

The solution to this problem is to spread the knowledge of the righteous predecessors, *al-ilm ash-shari' saheeh* (the correct knowledge of Islaam). This comes from the knowledge taught by the reliable scholars and the books of the *salaf*. The young should return to the *ulama* to seek their advice instead of following these so-called thinkers and their *takfeeri* books. All of those who write advocating this methodology are not even known for being from the true *ulama* holding to the path of the *salaf*.

On the other hand, Muslim societies and governments should take the corrective approach of adhering to the *shar'eeah*. Once this is done for the sake of Allaah (*subhaanahu wa ta'ala*), then the promise of Allaah to bestow strength and steadfastness upon the *ummah* will surely be manifested.

Furthermore, there should always be a hand extended to our youth who may have influenced by *takfeer*. There should be useful discussions in this matter and a refuting of the views held by them based on evidences and proofs.

If there is anything we need to emphasize every now and then, whether regarding this matter or the understanding of Islaam as a whole, it is that people should be very serious about knowing Islaam from its two sources, the Qur'an and the way of the *Rasool Allaah* (Messenger of Allaah) in accordance with the understanding of the companions. This is the criteria of safety; this is the path that every Muslim should give his utmost effort to learn; this is the true safeguard mechanism for the individual and thus for the family and the society at large.

And Advice to the Youth:

Finally, we all know that emotions are real, and care for Islaam is a strong motivation to its adherents. The motivation by care, sincerity, and emotion if not guided by the following of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in accordance with the way of the *salaf*, then it can turn into a blazing fire of destruction. Hence, a sincere advice is stressed again for all of our youth: seek knowledge from its reliable sources and from the *ulama* who are on the path of the companions.

May Allaah the most High guide us and our Muslim youth to be on the path of righteousness and wisdom, and may Allaah, the Most High, safe guide this *ummah* from the *fitnah* of *takfeer*.

The slave of Allaah, *Saleh As-Saleh*.
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